

## USFK SAFETY AWARENESS BULLETIN #02 -01 (Driving Drowsy)

<http://www-usfksafety.korea.army.mil>

**Sleep can come over you very quickly. It only takes a second to shut your eyes, leave your lane, and crash.**

About 0830 on 01 Jun 02, a KATUSA was fatally injured when his vehicle (1998 Galloper II) left the road and hit a metal support beam. A KGS civilian employee was also seriously injured in the accident.

Preliminary investigation indicates that the soldier fell asleep at the wheel.



Drowsy driving is a factor in approximately 100,000 crashes per year, resulting in about 1,500 fatalities, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

In a 1999 National Sleep Foundation poll, 57% of all adults surveyed reported driving a car or other vehicle while feeling drowsy in the prior year. Twenty-seven percent reported that they had, at some time, dozed off while driving. Twenty-three percent of adults stated that they know someone who experienced a fall-asleep crash within the past year.

**Anyone can fall prey to drowsiness if they haven't had enough sleep.**

### Know the danger signs

Contrary to popular belief, most drivers can't tell when they're getting sleepy. It's best to take long trips with someone else in the car, so they can watch for signs of sleepiness. If you haven't been getting enough sleep, you're already at risk. If you experience any of these danger signs, you should pull over and rest.

- Your eyes close or go out of focus by themselves.
- You have trouble keeping your head up.
- You can't stop yawning.
- You have wandering, disconnected thoughts.
- You don't remember driving the last few miles.
- You drift between lanes, tailgate, or miss traffic signs.
- You keep jerking the car back into the lane.
- You have drifted off the road and narrowly missed crashing.

*Source: National Sleep Foundation*

Most people know that driving under the influence of alcohol or other drugs is a deadly combination—many don't know the dangers associated with driving fatigued/drowsy.

They are often unaware of their deteriorating condition or, even when they are aware, are often motivated to keep driving. They think little of getting behind the wheel when fatigued, or continue to drive when they should really just stop and get some rest.

Fatigue is the state of feeling tired, weary, or sleepy that results from prolonged mental or physical work, extended periods of anxiety, exposure to harsh environments, or loss of sleep. Boring or monotonous tasks will increase feelings of fatigue. Generally, fatigue interrupts attention and causes slow and inaccurate performance.

Drivers who feel drowsy should take the feeling seriously. Studies show that drowsy drivers have slower reaction time, impaired judgment and vision, increased moodiness and aggressive behavior, and more difficulty following road signs. It is typical for drivers not to realize they are feeling fatigued or even to know when they are falling asleep at the wheel.

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Motorist who experiences any of the danger signs should:—

- **Recognize that they are in danger of falling asleep and cannot predict when a micro-sleep may occur.**

- **Not count on the radio, open window or other "tricks" to keep them awake.**
- **Respond to symptoms of fatigue by finding a safe place to stop for a break.**
- **Pull off into a safe area away from traffic and take a brief nap (15 to 45 minutes) if tired.**
- **Drink coffee or another source of caffeine to promote short-term alertness if needed. (It takes about 30 minutes for caffeine to enter the bloodstream)**

**As the driver, your safety and the safety of others on the road depend on your alertness behind the wheel. Get plenty of rest before setting out on your trip and stop when you are too tired to continue.**

### **Tips for staying awake — and alive**

**Get enough sleep.** While this varies from individual to individual, the average person requires about 8 hours of sleep a night. Make sure you get a good night's sleep before you start out on your trip. Drive during times of the day when you are normally awake and stay overnight rather than driving straight through.

**Avoid "down-times."** Don't drive during your body's natural sleepy periods. Take a mid-afternoon break and find a place to sleep between midnight and 6 a.m. — the time when most fatigue-related crashes take place.

**Yak it up.** If you have a passenger, make sure to talk. Because it's hard to detect yourself, your passenger can let you know when you're showing signs of sleepiness. Listen to their warning: Either let your passenger drive or pull over and take a nap.

**No sleeping in the front.** Make sure **both people in the front of the car are awake.** Passengers can help look for early warning signs of fatigue. A driver who needs rest should buckle up in the back seat and sleep.

**Take a break.** For long trips, take a break every two hours or 100 miles. If you show any signs of sleepiness, stop sooner.

**Avoid alcohol and medications.** Don't take over-the-counter or prescribed drugs that may impair performance. Alcohol interacts with fatigue, increasing its effects---just like drinking on an empty stomach.

*Source: National Sleep Foundation*

**To reduce the potential for traffic crashes caused by operator fatigue, leaders should:**

- **Establish and enforce duty hour limits for motor vehicle operators based on a careful operational risk assessment and consideration of regulatory guidance.**
- **Ensure that senior occupants and/or passengers understand their duties and responsibilities.**

Contact your local safety office or the USFK and Eighth U.S. Army Command Safety Office at 723-3934 for additional information or assistance.